

Edinburgh International Festival Announces Nicola Benedetti's First Programme



Festival Director Nicola Benedetti launches the 2023 Edinburgh International Festival. The Festival takes place from 4-27 August 2023. Photo: Mihaela Bodlovic

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4-27 AUGUST 2023
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- New Festival Director **Nicola Benedetti's** first **Edinburgh International Festival** programme is revealed.
- Benedetti sets out a vision for the 2023 Festival to deliver the **deepest possible experience**, with the **highest quality performances**, to the **broadest possible audience**.
- Following the Festival's 75th anniversary, under the direction of a new Festival Director, this year's programme is themed around the question '**where do we go from here?**'.
- Comprising **295** separate events from **4-27 August**, Edinburgh International Festival 2023 features work from over **2000** local and international artists from **across 48 nations**.

24 April 2023, Edinburgh: The global celebration of performing arts, **Edinburgh International Festival**, today unveils an expansive programme of world-class music, opera, dance and theatre to take place from **4 – 27 August 2023**. This year marks the first Festival under the direction of new Festival Director, **Nicola Benedetti**, one of today's most influential classical music artists.

With a bold ambition to reimagine how we experience and interact with live performance, Benedetti has set out a vision for the Festival to deliver the **deepest possible experience**, with the **highest quality performances**, to the **broadest possible audience**.

Inspired by the literature of Martin Luther King Jr, and his belief in people's capacity to unite, the 2023 Festival is charged by the question, '**where do we go from here?**', this expansive programme of **295 events**, asks us to consider how the transformative power of the arts can have the most impact on society at this moment. Three central themes underpin each week of the Festival: **community over chaos, hope in the face of adversity**, and **a perspective that's not one's own** - inviting audiences to consider ideas of identity, community and resilience as they experience Edinburgh this summer. Benedetti says, "*After we have celebrated 75 years of our Festival, we now enter into a new phase of redefining, together, where we go next*".

Diversity, discovery and internationalism are at the heart of the Edinburgh International Festival, this year welcoming artists from across **48 nations** and 6 continents to our stages. The 2023 International Festival also hosts three major artistic residencies with internationally renowned orchestras as part of ongoing ambitions to increasingly engage with the city of Edinburgh and reduce the amount of travel required for the international artists. This year's Festival also offers an unprecedented emphasis on a deepened audience experience, through performances for young people and families, participatory events, in-conversations, and intimate performances in informal performance spaces.

Highlights of the programme include:

- Two exceptional programmes from powerhouse dance company, **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**. The performances showcase recent works from the company's dynamic choreographers as well as classic repertoire by founder, **Alvin Ailey**, including one piece featuring local Scottish dancers alongside the professional company.
- An exciting new series in The Hub, the International Festival's home on the Royal Mile. In a first for the International Festival, the space will be taken over by afternoon and evening informal events and concerts that speak directly to the 2023 Festival's themes. Performers include: Palestinian singer **Nai Barghouti**, Scottish violinist **Catriona Price**, the **Aga Khan Master Musicians** celebrating music from the Silk Road trade route and a special Festival commission inspired by Martin Luther King Jr's visionary final speech, from Detroit-born bassist and house musician of *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, **Endea Owens**.
- The **Budapest Festival Orchestra**, led by conductor **Iván Fischer**, in residence at the International Festival across four captivating concerts. A highlight performance will be Dvořák's Eighth Symphony presented in an informal performance in the round, with the audience seated on beanbags, scattered amongst the orchestra. The concerts also include an all-Hungarian programme of works with **Sir András Schiff** and the **NYCOS National Girls Choir**, **Weber and Mendelssohn**, a concert celebrating three 19th-century Romantics and an in-conversation between Fischer and **Nicola Benedetti** exploring orchestras of the future and the orchestra's ongoing commitment to community.
- Three UK premieres from genre-defining stars of international theatre: **Barrie Kosky's *The Threepenny Opera*** from the **Berliner Ensemble**, Brazilian film and theatre director **Christiane Jatahy's *Dusk***, based on **Lars Von Trier's *Dogville***, and **Tiago Rodrigues' *As Far As Impossible***, recounting the everyday lives of humanitarian workers in war zones.

- One of Latin America's greatest orchestras, the **Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela**, in residence at the International Festival. Bringing its famed young ensemble of players aged 18-25, they are joined by conductors **Gustavo Dudamel** and **Rafael Payare** for a series of performances, including music from across the Americas and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.
- An epic new production of **Pina Bausch's** acclaimed choreography of **Stravinsky's** *The Rite of Spring*, with a cast of over 30 dancers from 14 African countries, presented in a double bill with duet **common ground[s]** from **Germaine Acogny** and **Malou Airaud**.
- The **London Symphony Orchestra** in residence, comprising a programme centered around hope: a concert of choral works from Szymanowski and Brahms; a cinematic programme featuring Principal Guest Conductor **Gianandrea Noseda**, Messiaen's sensational ***Turangalila Symphony***; and an intimate insight into the musical world of the London Symphony Orchestra, presented with an on-stage conversation from **Nicola Benedetti** and **Sir Simon Rattle**.
- The most substantial programme of Korean artists in the International Festival's 76-year history, in celebration of 140 years of diplomatic relations between Korea and the UK. Performances include the **KBS Symphony Orchestra** in their first UK appearance; International Festival debuts from multi-award-winning performers, pianist **Yeol Eum Son** and violinist **Clara-Jumi Kang**; first prize winners of the International Mozart Competition, the **Novus String Quartet**; and a fusion of ancient Korean storytelling, K-pop and Greek tragedy in ***Trojan Women*** by the **National Changgeuk Company of Korea**. *Trojan Women* features original music by K-pop producer and *Parasite* and *Squid Game* composer **Jung Jae-il**, in collaboration with renowned pansori master **Ahn Sook-sun**.
- Immersive works ***The Lost Lending Library*** from **Punchdrunk Enrichment**, welcoming young people aged 6-11 (and their parents or carers) into a magical traveling library; and ***FOOD***, an enchantingly absurd dinner party from New York City-based theatre-maker **Geoff Sobelle**. The uniquely Scottish play, the National Theatre of Scotland's ***Thrown***, from writer **Nat McCleary** under director **Johnny McKnight** comes to the Festival as part of its world premiere season, and all three productions will run for the entire duration of the Festival.
- Operatic works including a concert performance of ***Tannhäuser***, the only major Wagner opera that has not been performed at the International Festival. Wagner expert and Edinburgh local **Sir Donald Runnicles** conducts the **Deutsche Oper Berlin**, featuring American tenor **Clay Hilley** making his role debut as Tannhäuser; Mozart's enchanting masterpiece ***The Magic Flute*** performed in concert by the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Chorus**; and a radical retelling of Bartók's ***Bluebeard's Castle*** presented by **Theatre of Sound**, reimagining the relationship between Bluebeard and Judith as a husband and wife facing the reality of living with dementia whilst celebrating their long love.
- A contemporary dance programme featuring ***Phaedra/Minotaur***, a sensational double bill from opera and theatre director **Deborah Warner** and choreographer **Kim Brandstrup**, with **Benjamin Britten's** stirring final cantata *Phaedra*, and the return of maverick duo **Sharon Eyal** and **Gai Behar's** acclaimed **L-E-V**, with the final installation of their acclaimed *Love Cycle* Trilogy, ***Chapter 3: The Brutal Journey of the Heart***.
- ***Ogresse***, the UK premiere of a new musical journey of myth and song from three-time Grammy Award-winner **Cécile McLorin Salvant**. Cécile also performs in the Usher Hall for a special concert fusing jazz with blues, theatre and storytelling.

- World-leading orchestras are center stage in Edinburgh’s Usher Hall, including: the **Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra**, **Deutsche Oper Berlin**, **Royal Scottish National Orchestra**, **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra** and the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra** and **Chorus** with a concert performance of *The Magic Flute*, featuring a newly commissioned narration read by **Thomas Quasthoff**.
- A contemporary music programme featuring electro-pop icon **Alison Goldfrapp**; sitar virtuoso **Anoushka Shankar**; founding member of **The Velvet Underground**, **John Cale**; indie chart-topper **Jake Bugg**; Japanese folk artist **Ichiko Aoba**; award-winning Irish neo-folk group **Lankum**; Grammy Award-winning bluegrass band **Nickel Creek**; and experimental electronic icon **Matthew Herbert**.
- Intimate morning recitals at The Queen’s Hall featuring pianists **Mao Fujita**, **Leif Ove Andnes** and **Bertrand Chamayou**; vocal recitals from singers including **Julia Bullock** with pianist **Bretton Brown**, **Iestyn Davies**, **Catriona Morison**; and chamber music from the **Isidore String Quartet**, the **Amatis Trio**, **Jupiter Ensemble** and more.

General booking for the 2023 International Festival opens on **Wednesday 3 May**, with tickets currently on-sale to Members and supporters.

Nicola Benedetti, Festival Director, Edinburgh International Festival said: *“Where do we go from here? At a time of huge global change and challenge, we will hear powerful and diverse perspectives of artists from across the world.”*

“Edinburgh International Festival has long been dedicated to advocating world-class performing art and innovating new ways to bring it to audiences. I am immensely proud of this year’s programme, and look forward to expanding on this legacy in 2023”.

Culture Minister Christina McKelvie said: *“The Scottish Government is proud to support the Edinburgh International Festival and it’s wonderful to see such an exciting and diverse line-up in this year’s programme. The International Festival is the jewel in our summer festival crown, attracting people from across Scotland as well as visitors from further afield to this world-class event in Edinburgh.”*

Cllr Val Walker, Culture and Communities Convener at City of Edinburgh Council said: *“The Capital has a long history of promoting the value of culture and we look forward to this year’s programme of 295 events that will celebrate world-class music, opera, dance and theatre across our wonderful city. I’m delighted the Council is yet again able to support this year’s Festival, and I would encourage everyone to explore this year’s programme and grab their tickets – it’s not to be missed.”*

Iain Munro, Chief Executive, Creative Scotland said: *“As we emerge into a new post-pandemic world, the Edinburgh International Festival is perfectly placed to address the big issues of our times, just as it was when founded 76 years ago. Nicola Benedetti’s vision uses our most vital universal language – the arts – to draw together world-class performances that challenge and inspire, affect, and entertain, placing Scotland at the forefront of the cultural calendar. Creative Scotland is proud to support such an exhilarating programme of home-grown and international artists.”*

Programme information by genre:

Classical Music

The world’s finest orchestras and musicians gather in Edinburgh for 22 magnificent symphonic concerts in the Usher Hall and 19 intimate morning recitals in The Queen’s Hall.

The symphonic series of concerts is built around residences from three major orchestras, each responding to the three overarching themes of the 2023 International Festival. Presenting their own view of what a

modern symphony orchestra can be, these residences allow deeper engagement with communities in Edinburgh, taking the orchestra beyond the Usher Hall, and reduce the environmental impact per performance of the visiting artists.

The **Budapest Festival Orchestra**, led by conductor **Iván Fischer**, was formed with the purpose of serving the community, and to share the joy of music in all forms to all generations. Responding directly to the theme of *community over chaos*, the Orchestra is in residence at the International Festival for four concerts, including an all-Hungarian programme of works with **Sir András Schiff**. Another featuring the **NYCOS National Girls Choir**, **Weber and Mendelssohn**, is a concert celebrating three 19th-century Romantics and a conversational performance exploring ideas for orchestras of the future. The Budapest Festival Orchestra also performs Dvořák's Eighth Symphony in a casual, conversational presentation in the round, with the audience seated on beanbags mixed within the orchestra.

The **London Symphony Orchestra** residency draws on the theme of *hope in the face of adversity* in their residency's repertoire, searching for love and joy in a time of war. One of these works is Messiaen's sensational **Turangalila Symphony**, a profound cry of relief at the end of the Second World War from a composer, interned in a prisoner of war camp, who had no sense that he would necessarily survive the conflict. It also comprises a concert of choral works from Szymanowski and Brahms, a cinematic programme featuring Principal Guest Conductor **Gianandrea Noseda**, and a special musical insight into the world of the London Symphony Orchestra, with introduction from **Nicola Benedetti** and **Sir Simon Rattle**.

The final week's residency welcomes one of Latin America's greatest orchestras, the **Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela**. Bringing their famed young ensemble of players, aged 18-25, that were educated through the renowned El Sistema music program, they are joined by conductors **Gustavo Dudamel** and **Rafael Payare**, for a series of performances including Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Described as 'a beautiful model for society' by Gustavo Dudamel, the orchestra addresses the theme of a *perspective that's not one's own*, by offering an example of music as a vehicle for social change.

Opening the 2023 orchestral series will be the Scottish premiere of **Tan Dun's Buddha Passion**, composed by **Tan Dun** (Academy Award-winning composer of scores such as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*). Tan Dun will conduct the performance himself, with the **Royal Scottish National Orchestra** and the **Edinburgh Festival Chorus**. The score fuses the ancient wisdom of Buddhism with the musical tradition of the western *Passion*.

The orchestra performs again with the Chorus under the baton of **Sir Andrew Davis**, in Michael Tippett's oratorio *A Child of Our Time*. They also join forces with the **National Youth Choir of Scotland** and, before the concert, singers from all over Scotland demonstrate the Kodály method of singing.

The first of the **Oslo Philharmonic's** two concerts, both conducted by Chief Conductor **Klaus Mäkelä**, features an extract from *Earth's Song* by Norwegian composer Rolf Gupta and Sibelius's brooding Seventh Symphony, with Swedish soprano **Johanna Wallroth** in Mahler's sublime Fourth Symphony. In the second of their two concerts, the orchestra is joined by pianist **Yuja Wang**, who brings her exceptional musicianship to a programme featuring pieces by Ravel.

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra asks, 'where do we go from here?' in a concert presented by **Nicola Benedetti** and acclaimed broadcaster **Tom Service**, exploring orchestral works by some of today's most exciting composers.

In the Festival's headquarters, The Hub, cellist and musical innovator **Abel Selacoe** pairs music by JS Bach with his own South African compositions, and musicians from the **Aga Khan Music Masters**

programme celebrate music from across the Silk Road countries. The Hub's intimate gig series also features virtuosic Hungarian Gypsy folk music from **Geza and the 5 DeViLs**, a jazz-infused performance from cellist **Ayanna-Witter Johnson** and the **LSO Percussion Ensemble**, a blend of Middle Eastern and European styles from Palestinian powerhouse **Nai Barghouti**, and percussionist **Dame Evelyn Glennie** in a conversational recital sharing her unique journey as a musician.

The Queen's Hall hosts a series of intimate mid-morning recitals featuring some of the world's leading soloists and chamber musicians.

This year's programme features the International Festival debut of New York's **Isidore String Quartet**, as well as American soprano **Julia Bullock**, accompanied by pianist **Bretton Brown**, in a special programme exploring inspiring songs from women across genres, including Billie Holiday and Nina Simone. Leading South Korean ensemble the **Novus String Quartet** also performs at the International Festival for the first time, with three contrasting masterpieces from the heart of string quartet repertoire.

Recital performances include **Clara Jumi-Kang**, **Mao Fujita**, **Nick Pritchard** and **Ian Tindale**, **Yeol Eum Son** and Scottish pianist **Malcolm Martineau**, joined in one performance by Austrian bass **Günther Groissböck** and another performance with Edinburgh-born mezzo soprano **Catriona Morison**. Ensemble performances include **Jupiter Ensemble**, **Dunedin Consort**, the **Castalian String Quartet** and **Camerata Bern**, led by violinist **Patricia Kopatchinskaja**.

In a 'surprise recital', **Sir Andrés Schiff** performs repertoire announced from the stage, with lively insights into the music he loves, and three-time Grammy Award-winner **Thomas Quasthoff** and the **Amatis Trio** pair letters from the First World War with musical interludes. This year The Queen's Hall also welcomes eminent performers joined by a collective of musicians, including harpist **Emmanuel Ceysson** and friends with an all-French programme, internationally renowned oboist **Albrecht Mayer** and friends, and American violinist **Stefan Jackiw** and friends performing chamber pieces based on folk music.

A performance of the *Mendelssohn Octet* also features **Stefan Jackiw** with fellow professionals **Jessica Bodner** and **Sterling Elliot**, joined by 5 emerging string players selected by **Nicola Benedetti** from an international call-out for players on the cusp of starting their professional careers.

See www.eif.co.uk/classicalmusic for information on individual performances.

Theatre

Brazilian film and theatre director **Christiane Jatahy** makes her International Festival debut with the UK premiere of *Dusk*, an arresting performance based on Lars Von Trier's *Dogville*. A young Brazilian woman flees her homeland and finds refuge in a community of theatre artists staging *Dogville*. Tackling the idea of **community over chaos**, *Dusk* explores to what extent our society is tolerant of the Other. Jatahy was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement in Theatre at the 2022 Venice Biennale and praised for merging the horizons of cinema and theatre.

For the entire length of the Festival, the **National Theatre of Scotland** presents the new work *Thrown*: five wildly different women gather in the muddy fields of the Highland Games circuit, ready to compete in the obscure art of Scottish backhold wrestling. Glasgow-based writer, actor and movement specialist **Nat McCleary** joins forces with director and performer **Johnny McKnight** to create this uniquely Scottish play, presented in its world premiere season.

Following the success of his 2018 show *HOME*, **Geoff Sobelle** returns to the International Festival with *FOOD*, an immersive performance offering a meditation on how and why we eat. The audience gathers

around a dining table for an intimate dinner party of smell, taste and touch, in a performance served with Sobelle's signature flavour of rigorous design, stage illusion and an absurdist sense of humour.

Portuguese theatre director and Director of the Festival D'Avignon, **Tiago Rodrigues**, asks powerful questions within the theme of *hope in the face adversity*, delving into what drives someone to risk their life to help others in the UK premiere of ***As Far As Impossible***. Inspired by the testimonies of staff from the International Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders, this multilingual performance exposes the dilemmas of those who come and go between troubled areas of intervention and their own peaceful homes.

Punchdrunk Enrichment welcome young people aged 6-11 (and their parents and carers) into ***The Lost Lending Library***, a site-specific immersive experience that will also run for the duration of the Festival. The show is set in a giant travelling library, containing the largest collection of books in the world, as young audiences help one of its departments find new stories.

Two award-winning Belgian mime and puppetry companies, **Focus Company** and **Chaliwaté Company**, come together for a stunning visual performance in ***Dimanche***. Combining puppetry, video, mime and clowning, *Dimanche* observes *hope in the face of adversity* in the ingenuity and stubbornness of humans, as they try to preserve their day-to-day habits, going to absurd extremes to keep up a sense of normalcy despite the chaos of an ecological collapse.

Award-winning international theatre company **Cheek by Jowl** presents a radical new version of Spanish classic, ***Life is a Dream***. Marking its first Spanish-language production, performed by an ensemble of Spanish actors, the company returns to the International Festival after its 2016 production of *Measure for Measure*, with one of the 40 greatest plays of all time.

See www.eif.co.uk/theatre for information on individual productions.

Opera and Music Theatre

Trojan Women blends Greek tragedy and pansori, an ancient Korean form of musical storytelling, from the **National Changgeuk Company of Korea** and visionary Singaporean director **Ong Keng Sen**. Set after the sacking of Troy, *Trojan Women* sweeps audiences up in the heartbreak and determination of the city's female survivors, in a portrait of *community over chaos*. Brought to life by over 25 singers, actors and musicians, the original music was created by K-pop producer and *Parasite* and *Squid Game* composer **Jung Jae-il** in collaboration with renowned pansori master **Ahn Sook-sun**.

The Berliner Ensemble, founded by **Bertolt Brecht** himself, is joined by **Barrie Kosky** for ***The Threepenny Opera***, a seminal work of 20th-century music theatre. Based on **John Gay's** *The Beggar's Opera*, this satire of the post-war rise of capitalism is a story of *hope in the face of adversity*, following the exploits of notorious criminal Mack the Knife. Kosky, the former Artistic Director of Komische Oper Berlin, returns to the International Festival following his acclaimed production of *Eugene Onegin* in 2019.

Wagnerian expert and Edinburgh local, **Sir Donald Runnicles** conducts the **Deutsche Oper Berlin for a concert performance of *Tannhäuser***, the only major Wagner opera that has not been performed at the Edinburgh International Festival on stage or in concert. Sung in German with English surtitles, American tenor **Clay Hilley** makes his role debut as Tannhäuser, with **Emma Bell** as Elisabeth.

Groundbreaking new opera company **Theatre of Sound** presents a radical retelling of one of opera's great masterpieces — Bartók's ***Bluebeard's Castle***. In a departure from the original folktale, this production offers *a perspective that's not one's own*, as director **Daisy Evans** reimagines the relationship between Bluebeard and Judith as a husband and wife facing the reality of living with dementia, whilst celebrating their long love and shared memories. Sung in English with a newly commissioned libretto, the production

features players from the **Hebrides Ensemble** and a new chamber orchestration conducted by **Stephen Higgins**.

Mozart's enchanting masterpiece ***The Magic Flute*** is performed in concert by the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra** and **Chorus**, led by their Principal Conductor **Maxim Emelyanychev**. The cast of exciting singers includes **Julia Bullock** as Pamina and **Kathryn Lewek** as The Queen of the Night. Sung in German, it is performed with a newly commissioned narration read by **Thomas Quasthoff**.

See www.eif.co.uk/opera for information on individual performances.

Dance

The UK premiere of **Pina Bausch's** ***The Rite of Spring*** was performed in 1978 at the International Festival. This year, it returns in a double bill evening with the original choreography, and a cast of over 30 specially assembled dancers from 14 African countries. In this pioneering work, on an earth-covered stage, dancers clash and engage in a wild and poetic struggle to the music of Stravinsky, demonstrating *hope in the face of adversity* as a 'chosen one' is sacrificed changing the season from winter to spring. Opening the evening is a new work, ***common ground[s]***, performed and created in a first-time collaboration between **Germaine Acogny**, the 'mother of contemporary African dance' and **Malou Airaud** who performed leading roles in many of Bausch's early works.

America's most popular dance company, **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**, brings two programmes to the International Festival, showcasing recent works from the most dynamic choreographers of today and classic pieces by founder **Alvin Ailey**. Both programmes include the beloved masterpiece *Revelations*; the most widely viewed modern dance work in the world. Programme one includes **Aszure Barton's** *BUSK*, which examines the multi-layered wisdom of the human body, and **Kyle Abraham's** *Are You in Your Feelings?*, a celebration of Black culture and music. Programme two includes Mr Ailey's *Memoria*, featuring dance students selected from all over Scotland, marking their professional debut alongside the company.

Phaedra/Minotaur is a sensational double bill from opera and theatre director **Deborah Warner** and choreographer **Kim Brandstrup**. **Benjamin Britten's** final vocal work, the powerful cantata *Phaedra*, is paired with the thrilling new dance piece *Minotaur*, inspired by Greek mythology. Leading mezzo soprano **Christine Rice** reprises her Olivier Award-nominated performance, accompanied by acclaimed pianist **Richard Hetherington**.

Following the success of *OCD Love* and *Love Chapter 2* in 2018, **Sharon Eyal** and **Gai Behar's** **L-E-V Company** returns to the International Festival for the final instalment of their acclaimed trilogy with *Chapter 3: The Brutal Journey of the Heart*. Nine dancers embark on an intense journey that exemplifies *community over chaos*, exploring love and the emotional highs and lows of relationships as an ensemble. The performance features striking costumes from **Maria Grazia Chiuri**, the Creative Director of Christian Dior Couture, with an ethereal score that travels through music styles ranging from blues and country to folk and Afrobeat.

See www.eif.co.uk/dance for information on individual performances.

Contemporary Music

Spanning four iconic Edinburgh venues, this year's contemporary music programme crosses electronic, jazz, blues, roots, indie folk, contemporary folk, Scottish traditional music, Portuguese fado and Indian contemporary-classical. In a truly international programme, innovative acts from Japan, South Africa, Hungary, the United States, Palestine, Portugal and Ireland, as well as leading Scottish talent, come to Edinburgh for a series of exhilarating concerts.

In the Edinburgh Playhouse, English electronic icon **Alison Goldfrapp** promises a night of highly danceable synth-pop, bringing the dreamy and distinctive blend that has seen Goldfrapp stack up five US Number One hits – including the sensational signature track ‘Ooh La La’ – and five top 10 UK albums.

Chart-topping singer-songwriter **Jake Bugg’s** bluesy, Brit-pop-forward indie folk pairs working-class swagger with wry, weathered romanticism. After finding success in 2012 with his Mercury Prize-nominated eponymous debut album, the then 18-year-old from Nottingham was fêted as the next Bob Dylan. Bugg has been steadily developing his sound and comes to the International Festival to show an artistic complexity that refuses to be defined.

Credited with revolutionising bluegrass and folk music to cement their place in the American roots annals, **Nickel Creek** are set to mark a new era in their careers, coming to the International Festival as part of their first tour as a group since 2014. The Grammy-Award winning trio – mandolinist and member of **The Punch Brothers**, **Chris Thile**, violinist **Sara Watkins** and guitarist **Sean Watkins** – add to a landmark year for the band with the release of their first album in nine years, the highly-anticipated *Celebrants*, showcasing the intricate musicianship for which they are so beloved.

For nearly 60 years, **John Cale** has been reinventing and reimagining his music, forging a varied and prolific career. Since forming **The Velvet Underground** in 1964, he has created music spanning rock’n’roll, electronica and folk. His latest album *MERCY* continues this career-long experimentation, with a stellar cast of collaborations including Laurel Halo, Sylvan Esso and Animal Collective.

Lady Blackbird is a revelatory new talent with music that reflects influences as varied as Billie Holiday, Gladys Knight, Tina Turner and Chaka Khan. The Los Angeles-based jazz singer has emerged over the last few years as one of the biggest contemporary voices in jazz, possessing a style and emotional intensity that makes her Festival Theatre show not to be missed.

Also in the Festival Theatre, Portuguese fado star **Mariza** incorporates gospel, soul and jazz to open up the possibilities of fado music to create a sound that is distinctly hers. Having started her 20-year career as a hidden talent, beloved by Lisbon locals, the Mozambique-born Portuguese singer has grown to become the genre’s best-known global representative, and comes to the International Festival with her expressive live show.

Masterful sitar player **Anoushka Shankar** brings her electrifying show to the International Festival, combining classical with contemporary and acoustic with electronic. Shankar began studying the sitar and Indian classical music at an early age, and has now accrued nine Grammy Award nominations, as the first Indian woman to ever be nominated.

In a world premiere performance, celebrated British electronic musician and producer **Matthew Herbert** challenges his considerable legacy with one of his most extraordinary projects to date, *The Horse*. Using instruments crafted from a horse skeleton, Herbert also gathered more than 6,900 horse sounds from the internet to create a unique sonic world. With albums such as *Bodily Functions* and *Around the House* regarded as left-field house classics and remixes spanning from Björk to Dizzee Rascal, Herbert’s takeover of the Queen’s Hall is not to be missed.

Japanese folk singer-songwriter **Ichiko Aoba** draws audiences into a dreamlike world with her feather-light vocals and hypnotic sound. Performing for the first time in Scotland, the rising star in Japan will play with a Scottish string quartet in the Queen’s Hall. Aoba’s ‘greatest strength’, as described by Pitchfork, ‘is her ability to create pockets of intimacy’, with International Festival audiences set to be welcomed into her alluring sound-world.

Irish radical folk group **Lankum** draw on folk songs and lean into heavy drones and sonic distortion to put their own dark, distinctive mark on traditional Irish styles. Bringing their trademark gothic intensity to the Queen's Hall, Lankum's contemporary take on traditional elements promises a night of bold, genre-defying musicality.

Detroit-born bassist and composer **Endea Owens** (house bassist for *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*) presents two concerts: a concert of vibrant versions of beloved jazz standards and original compositions with her sextet, and a world premiere work inspired by Dr Martin Luther King Jr's visionary final speech, 'I've Been to the Mountaintop', a special commission by the International Festival.

Three-time Grammy Award-winner **Cécile McLorin Salvant** performs two shows at the International Festival: opening night performance **Ogresse** is the UK premiere of a new musical journey of myth and song, telling the story of a lovesick, ravenous monster, resonating in contemporary dialogues about racism, sexism, colonialism and power dynamics. Cécile also performs in the Usher Hall for a special concert subverting jazz standards and blending them with blues, theatre and storytelling.

Scottish performers in The Hub include **Catriona Price**'s new composition *HERT*, fusing classical music with the sounds and stories of her native Orkney, and a double bill of **Aly Bain** and **Phil Cunningham** showcasing some of the very best of Scottish traditional music, followed later in the evening by the neo-trad trio **Project Smok**.

A full line-up can be found at www.eif.co.uk/contemporarymusic.

Special Events

In partnership with the **Festival of Politics**, keynote series *Where Do We Go From Here?* sees artists and thinkers from across the world offer their visions for the future. Hosted in the Scottish Parliament, each session will include a Q&A, where audiences can help shape responses to the question: where do we go from here?

The Opening Celebration welcomes everyone to take part in the fun, with a free celebration of professional and community music-making from artists from across Scotland in Princes Street Gardens.

On the final weekend of the Festival, the garden at Charlotte Square will be opened to the public as a musical oasis, where a soundscape of recorded music from the International Festival classical music concerts can be enjoyed in a collective listening experience for all.

As part of the International Festival's ongoing commitment to accessibility, the 2023 programme includes 29 accessible performances, including nine audio described performances, six BSL interpreted performances, seven captioned performances and two relaxed performances.

In 2023, the **Edinburgh International Film Festival** returns as a bespoke film programme hosted by the Edinburgh International Festival. The film programme celebrates the work of exceptional local and global filmmakers and ensures the flame of EIFF burns bright for future generations of passionate cinema fans. The full programme will be announced in June.

– ENDS –

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For information about the Edinburgh International Festival's 2023 partnerships – see [here](#)

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Edinburgh International Festival

Edinburgh International Festival is a **global celebration of performing arts**, bringing the **finest performers of dance, opera, music and theatre** from around the world to Edinburgh for **three weeks every August**.

The International Festival will take place **4-27 August 2023** and is the first from Festival Director and Scottish violinist **Nicola Benedetti**. Benedetti's vision for the program is to create the deepest level of experience, through the highest quality of art, for the broadest possible audience. Each year the programme will also be developed around a central question, this year's asks '**where do we go from here?**'

The International Festival's impact also extends beyond the annual programme, with community learning, engagement and professional development programmes running throughout the year, contributing to the cultural and social life of Edinburgh and Scotland.

For more information visit www.eif.co.uk

2023 International Festival supporters

The core investment that the Edinburgh International Festival receives from the City of Edinburgh Council and Creative Scotland plays a critical role in ensuring our stability and success. The income we receive through project grants allows us to present work that is often additional to our core programme. This year, and for the eighth consecutive year, EventScotland will be supporting our Opening Event.

Private funding and support from individuals, the corporate sector, trusts and foundations and the Edinburgh International Festival Endowment Fund is also vitally important in enabling us to present a Festival of scale and quality in 2023, as well as ensuring the success and positive impact of our year-round learning and engagement initiatives. As a Festival which creates and fosters cross-border cultural connections and understanding, we remain extraordinarily grateful to our international partners and supporters. This year we are particularly thankful to our Korea in Focus Partner, the Korean Cultural Centre UK, as we celebrate 140 years of diplomatic relations between Korea and the UK.

Full details of all 2023 supporters can be found at <https://www.eif.co.uk/support-us>.

Edinburgh International Festival's Learning and Engagement Programme

The International Festival connects with thousands of people around Edinburgh through its year-round bespoke Learning and Engagement programmes, supported by our Learning & Engagement Partner, Baillie Gifford Investment Managers.

The International Festival believes that the arts are for everyone and aims to connect with people of all ages, both locally and internationally, through projects that explore our values of discovery, connection and internationalism at their heart. Striving to ensure global celebration of culture is accessible to all, Learning and Engagement aim to create a variety of year-round projects and opportunities.

This summer will see flagship projects such as Culture Clubs for community groups and our Opera Project for secondary school pupils return to the city. This year the International Festival is partnering with a range of companies and organisations to support this work including Alvin Ailey Company, the London Symphony Orchestra, Imagnate, Punchdrunk Enrichment and a range of local and international artists.

See www.eif.co.uk/learning-and-engagement for more information.